

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 IO-13 ACDA-07 EB-07 AID-05

IGA-02 TRSE-00 OMB-01 CU-02 PC-01 COME-00 /108 W

-----311404Z 004511 /50

R 310800Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8732

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGUI 1094

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS CT

SUBJ: THE EMPIRE SIX MONTHS ON

SUMMARY: THE 4TH OF JUNE MARKS THE END OF THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE. CREATED FROM A REVOLUTIONARY REPUBLIC, EMBELLISHED WITH A NEW CONSTITUTION AND DEDICATED, ON PAPER AT LEAST, TO BROAD HUMAN RIGHTS, THE OFT MOCKED EMPIRE IS AN ANOMALY ON THE AFRICAN POLITICAL SCENE. ITS LONG TERM VIABILITY REMAINS IN DOUBT DEPENDING ESSENTIALLY ON THE POLITICAL WILL AND SKILL OF ONE MAN. ALTHOUGH SOME HAD THOUGHT THAT BOKASSA'S AUTHORITY WAS SLIPPING IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CREATION OF THE EMPIRE, HE IS NOW ONCE AGAIN CLEARLY ASSERTING HIS AUTHORITY OVER DAY TO DAY AFFAIRS. THE NEXT SIX MONTHS WILL PROBABLY SEE FURTHER MOVEMENTS IN THIS DIRECTION ALTHOUGH BOKASSA AND HIS COURTIER WILL BE ENGROSSED IN PREPARATIONS FOR THE DEC 4 CORONATION. IN THIS PERIOD OF DOMESTIC PREOCCUPATIONS, NO MAJOR SHIFTS IN FOREIGN POLICY ARE LIKELY SINCE BOKASSA WILL BE SEEKING THE

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WIDEST POSSIBLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE LEGITMACY OF THE EMPIRE AT THE CORONATION. IN GENERAL, MAJOR DECISIONS WILL BE DEFERRED AS ALL EYES FOCUS ON THE GREAT DAY AHEAD. IN THIS PERIOD OUR RELATIONS SHOULD REMAIN STABLE, ALWAYS ASSUMING WE CONTINUE WITH OUR VARIOUS AID PROGRAMS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE EARLY MONTHS OF THE EMPIRE HAVE PASSED WITHOUT INCIDENT.

ON JUNE 4TH IT ENTERS ITS SECOND HALF YEAR. THE FIRST HUNDRED DAYS, WHICH SOME AT LEAST WATCHED IN ANTICIPATION OF ANOTHER IMPERIAL WATERLOO, WERE PARTICULARLY UNEVENTFUL. EMPEROR BOKASSA REMAINED ON RETREAT AT BERENGO BUSYING HIMSELF WITH RURAL PROBLEMS; THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL, THE WELFARE OF LOCAL FARMERS, ETC. THE GOVT OF PRIME MINISTER PATASSE FUNCTIONED IN BANGUI AND OPERATED WITH SOMEWHAT ENHANCED EFFICIENCY AND SENSE OF PURPOSE, AT LEAST IN COMPARISON WITH THE PRE-IMPERIAL ADMINISTRATION. MAJOR DECISIONS WERE STILL REFERRED TO THE EMPEROR, BUT HE DID NOT INVOLVE HIMSELF EXTENSIVELY IN THE DAY TO DAY OPERATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT AS HE HAD IN THE PRE-IMPERIAL PERIOD. A SLIGHT ACCELERATION OF THE BUREAUCRACY'S GLACIAL PACE WAS NOTED.

2. THE LAST TWO MONTHS, HOWEVER, HAVE SEEN A DRAMATIC REVERSAL OF THIS SITUATION. INCREASINGLY, THE EMPEROR HAS STRONGLY REASSERTED HIS AUTHORITY. CABINET MEETINGS ARE MORE FREQUENTLY HELD AT BERENGO. EVEN WHEN THEY ARE HELD IN BANGUI, AT LEAST THREE MEMBERS OF THE IMPERIAL COURT MUST NOW ATTEND. IN ADDITION THE IMPERIAL COURT HAS BEEN GIVEN PRECEDENCE OVER THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS RELEGATED TO RELATIVE INFERIORITY AFTER THE COURT, THE OFFICERS OF THE NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTY AND THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (A BODY PROMISED IN THE DECEMBER 1976 CONSTITUTION BUT YET TO BE CREATED). THE EMPEROR HAS ALSO PUT THE CAISSE DE STABILISATION BACK UNDER HIS DIRECT CONTROL AND HE HAS PERSONALLY SACKED OR TRANSFERRED MINISTERS AND OTHER OFFICIALS.

3. SEVERAL REASONS HAVE BEEN ADDUCED FOR THIS REASSERTION OF BOKASSA'S AUTHORITY. IMPERIAL ENNUI IS CERTAINLY A FACTOR. NUMEROUS OBSERVERS HAVE REPORTED THAT BOKASSA IS BORED WITH LIFE

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DOWN ON THE FARM. MORE IMPORTANTLY PERHAPS WERE SIGNS THAT SOME OF THE BANGUI LEADERSHIP WERE GETTING TOO BIG FOR THEIR BRITCHES. THERE ARE CONTINUING RUMORS THAT THE EMPEROR IS DISSATISFIED WITH THE PRIME MINISTER FOR HIS HIGHLY VISIBLE LEADERSHIP OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE SACKING OF THE UGTC GENERAL SECRETARY (BANGUI 1030) MAY ALSO HAVE HAD A SIMILAR ORIGIN SINCE ZEMONIAKO SEEMED TO BE ASPIRING TO NATIONAL LEADERSHIP THROUGH HIS TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION. THE DECISIVE FACTOR, HOWEVER, IS PROBABLY BOKASSA'S LOVE OF POWER. AFTER ELEVEN YEARS AS CONCERT MASTER IN A ONE-MAN BAND, HE IS UNABLE TO ACCEPT PLAYING SECOND FIDDLE TO PATASSE OR ANY OTHER ASSORTMENT OF CENTRAL AFRICAN WORTHIES.

4. THE QUESTION WHICH BOKASSA MUST BE ASKING HIMSELF IS WHETHER THERE ARE NOW SOME IN THE GOVERNMENT, WHO HAVING HAD A TASTE OF POWER, MAY WISH TO ASSERT THEMSELVES AT THE EMPEROR'S EXPENSE. ALTHOUGH MOST CENTRAL AFRICAN OFFICIALS AND POLITICIANS HAVE SHOWN THEMSELVES IN THE PAST TO BE REMARKEDLY PUSILLANIMOUS, A BOLDER SPIRIT MAY NOW BE AT WORK. BOKASSA WILL CERTAINLY WATCH FOR ANY SIGNS OF REBELLION OR DISAFFECTION AND WILL MOVE RAPIDLY

TO ELIMINATE THEM IF POSSIBLE.

5. THE NEXT SIX MONTHS WILL BE A PARTICULARLY CRITICAL PERIOD. FROM NOW UNTIL DEC 4, THE GOVERNMENT INDEED THE WHOLE COUNTRY, WILL BE PREOCCUPIED WITH PLANS FOR THE CORONATION. TEN COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN SET UP TO OVERSEE ARRANGEMENTS INCLUDING VIRTUALLY EVERY CABINET MEMBER AND OFFICIAL OF IMPORTANCE. THE CORONATION'S IMPACT ON THE COUNTRY WILL BE CONSIDERABLE: ROUTINE DECISIONS WILL BE DEFERRED, RESOURCES REALLOCATED AND PRIORITIES READJUSTED TO MEET THE EMPEROR'S DEMANDS FOR THE MOST SPLENDID FESTIVITIES POSSIBLE. HERE, INDEED, IS A SOURCE FOR CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL DISSATISFACTION. AS THE STORIES OF IMPERIAL VANITIES BECOME KNOWN -- THE DIAMOND CROWN AND SCEPTRE, THE ENGLISH CARRIAGE AND EIGHT IMPORTED WHITE HORSES, THE ERMINE ROBES, -- THERE WILL BE INCREASING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RIDICULE OF THE REGIME AND RISING DISSATISFACTION WITH THE WASTE AND EXTRAVAGANCE. ALTHOUGH THE BREAD AND CIRCUSES ASPECT OF THE CORONATION WILL APPEAL TO THE MASSES, CONFIDENTIAL

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IT WILL HAVE FEWER ATTRACTIONS FOR THE EMERGING CENTRAL AFRICAN ELITE AND IT IS ON THEM THAT THE FUTURE OF THE REGIME ULTIMATELY WILL DEPEND. FOR THE TIME BEING THEIR DISSATISFACTIONS ARE MANAGEABLE, BUT THERE IS A GROWING DISINCLINATION TO ACCEPT THE

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01  
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IGA-02 TRSE-00 OMB-01 CU-02 PC-01 COME-00 /108 W  
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R 310800Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8733  
INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA  
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

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RIDICULE WHICH IS BEING HEAPED UPON THE EMPIRE AND WHICH WILL INCREASE AS THE CORONATION APPROACHES.

6. BUT WHAT OF THE EMPIRE'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THIS PERIOD. THE LAST SIX MONTHS HAVE BEEN ONES OF TRANQUILITY. BOKASSA HAS NOT TRAVELLED AND WILL NOT UNTIL AFTER THE CORONATION. CONSEQUENTLY THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN PALAVERING HAS BEEN REDUCED. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS ATTENDED MAJOR INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS ON THE EMPEROR'S BEHALF, AND WILL PRESUMABLY CONTINUE TO DO SO. CENTRAL AFRICA'S VOICE IN REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL AFFAIRS WILL BE MUTED AND NO INITIATIVES ARE LIKELY. BOKASSA'S PRIMARY CONCERN WILL BE TO HAVE AS MANY FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES AS POSSIBLE AT HIS CORONATION, AND HE WILL THEREFORE NOT WISH TO ANTAGONIZE ANY OF HIS TRADITIONAL FRIENDS. INDEED, HE WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO BE RESPONSIBLE TO THEIR CONCERNS AND IN PARTICULAR TO HELP HIS NEIGHBORS WHEN POSSIBLE. HE HAS ALREADY COME OUT FORCEFULLY ON MOBUTU'S SIDE ON THE SHABA INVASION; HE HAS SENT TROOPS TO THE SUDANESE BORDER TO PREVENT INCURSIONS AGAINST HIS EASTERN NEIGHBOR; AND  
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HE HAS TAKEN SIMILARLY SUPPORTIVE STEPS TOWARDS CHAD.

7. OUR RELATIONS WITH THE CAE HAVE CONTINUED ON AN EVEN AND GENERALLY POSITIVE KEEL. IN MARCH WE WERE SUBJECT TO AN OFFENSIVE OF IMPERIAL CHARM. THREE AUDIENCES FOR THE AMBASSADOR WITH THE EMPEROR IN AS MANY WEEKS AND AN IMPERIAL VISIT TO OUR TREASURES OF SPACE EXHIBIT WERE EVIDENCE OF THIS EFFORT. BOKASSA WAS RESPONSIVE TO OUR CONCERNS IN UGANDA AND HAS STRESSED HIS INTENTION OF BEING SUPPORTIVE OF OUR INTERESTS ON MAJOR ISSUES. THERE HAS BEEN SOMETHING OF A LET-UP SINCE, THEN POSSIBLY REFLECTING BOKASSA'S UNHAPPINESS AT OUR LACK OF MILITARY SUPPORT FOR MOBUTU, BUT NO FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES SEEM IN THE OFFING.

8. BOKASSA STILL NEEDS US MORE THAN WE NEED HIM FOR ECONOMIC, PERSONAL AND POLITICAL REASONS. ALTHOUGH OUR AID PROGRAM IS MODEST IT NONETHELESS REPRESENTS AN IMPORTANT INPUT OF RESOURCES. THE OUHAM RURAL HEALTH PROJECT, WHICH IS SCHEDULED FOR EARLY OBLIGATION, IS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION ON OUR PART TO THE WELFARE OF THE RURAL MASSES. OTHER PROJECTS IN THE AREAS OF EDUCATION, MEDICAL TRAINING, LIVESTOCK AND MINERAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT WHICH ARE ON THE DRAWING BOARDS MAKE IT LIKELY THAT BOKASSA WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK A COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH US. POLITICALLY IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT FOR HIM TO HAVE, IF NOT THE SUPPORT, AT LEAST THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE MAJOR EXTERNAL POWERS. FRANCE, OF COURSE, REMAINS THE CRITICAL ELEMENT IN IMPERIAL FOREIGN POLICY, FOR WITHOUT FRENCH RESOURCES THE SYSTEM WOULD COLLAPSE. BUT WE,

THE RUSSIANS, THE CHINESE AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY ARE ALL IMPORTANT TO BOKASSA IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THE AID WE PROVIDE. FINALLY, THERE IS A PERSONAL ELEMENT. BOKASSA WANTS A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE AT HIS CORONATION. THIS TO HIM IS A SYMBOL OF HIS ACCEPTANCE AS A RESPECTABLE MODERATE AFRICAN LEADER. AS WITH OTHER AFRICAN LEADERS, OUR WILLINGNESS TO SHOW A DIRECT PERSONAL INTEREST IN BOKASSA AND HIS NATIONAL PRIORITIES WILL HAVE AN IMPORTANT IMPACT ON OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS.

9. THE BACKGROUND OF GILBERTIAN HIGH COMEDY AGAINST WHICH WE  
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OPERATE IN BANGUI SHOULD NOT DEFLECT US FROM THE PROMOTION OF OUR LIMITED INTERESTS. BOKASSA CAN OCCASIONALLY BE HELPFUL TO US POLITICALLY. WE DO HAVE A HUMANITARIAN INTEREST IN SEEING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TAKE PLACE IN THIS BACKWARD AND ISOLATED CORNER OF AFRICA. ACCESS TO THE POTENTIAL MINERAL RESERVES OF CENTRAL AFRICA MAY BE IMPORTANT TO US IN THE FUTURE. IF THESE INTERESTS ARE TO BE MET WE SHALL NEED TO SHOW A TEMPERED BUT CONTINUING CONCERN FOR THE COUNTRY, THE MOST APPROPRIATE MEANS BEING OUR AID AND PEACE CORPS PROGRAMS WHICH REACH OUT TO THE DISADVANTAGED MASSES. WE MAY ALSO BE ABLE TO HELP THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY IN A MORE GENERAL SENSE BY USING OUR LIMITED INFLUENCE TO ENCOURAGE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IMPERIAL CONSTITUTION WHICH EMBODIES THE BASIC HUMAN, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS WHICH WE ARE COMMITTED TO PROMOTE. THIS EFFORT WILL BE THE ONGOING BASIS OF OUR DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES, BUT IT SHOULD ALSO FORM A PART OF ANY SPECIAL BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WE MAY HAVE AT THE TIME OF THE CORONATION OR ON OTHER CEREMONIAL OCCASIONS.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009